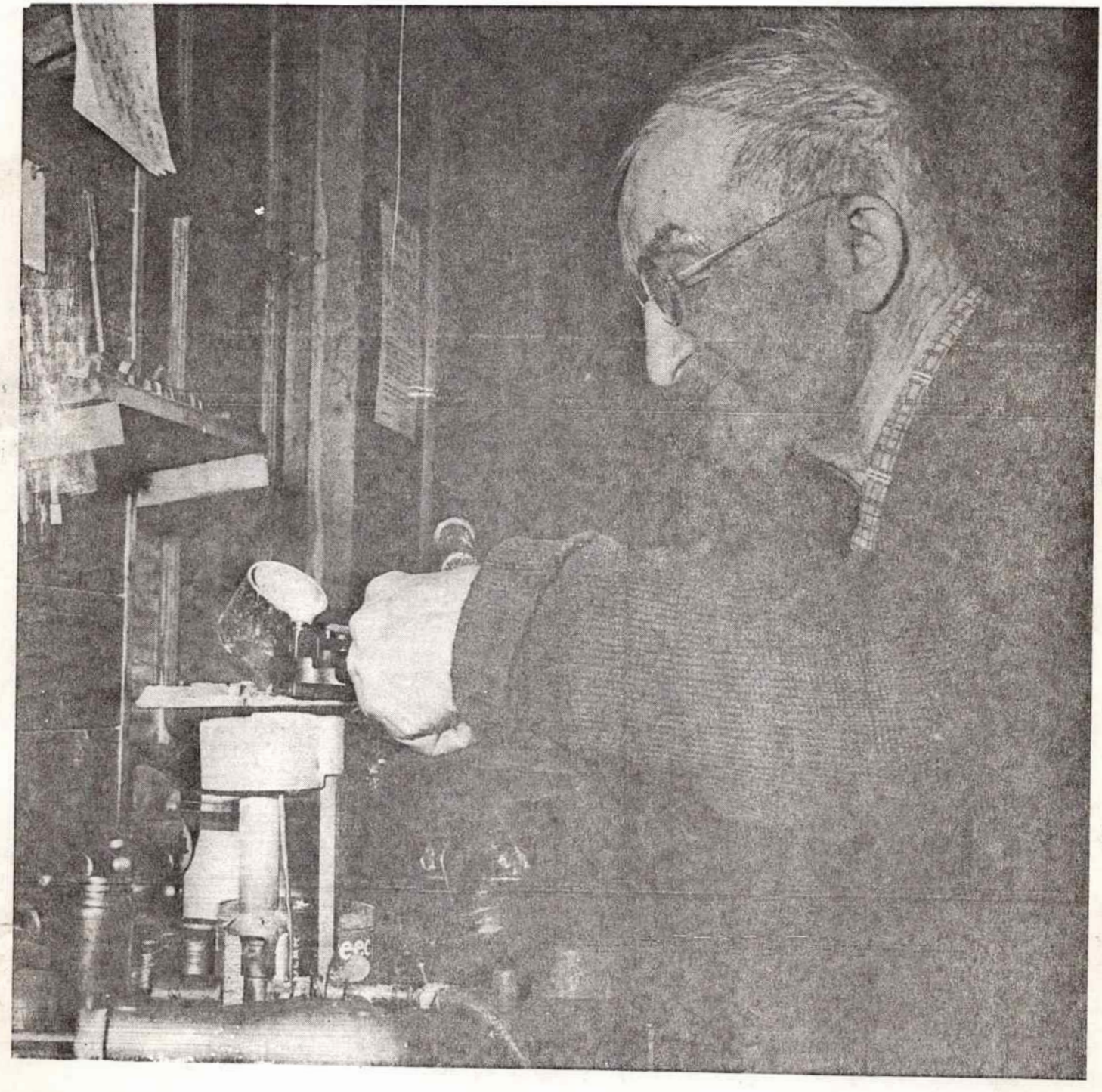
CHARLES T. DEMPORT

Charles T. Demport

Solvay Gunsmith



Free

CHARLES T. DEMPORT

by

Malcolm Mac Pherson Jr.

PREFACE

I have long thought that Charlie Demport's story should be recorded before it was lost. I have not found time for this until now, and it would have been a great deal easier to have done it a few years ago. Charlie is difficult to understand at this point, although his mind is surprisingly clear about many things. Because he does not speak too clearly no attempt has been made to record our conversations; also it would have been extremely difficult to maintain any continuity in that way. I have had several interviews with him, and he has made available his extensive records for my information. I acknowledge with thanks the help that has been given by friends of his; among them James Elmer, Clifford Jackson, Wayne Trew, Harold Steele and Jerry Swinney.

A psychologist would doubtless have called Charlie an individualist; his many friends and acquaintences know him as a "character." A talented man, mostly self-educated, he was a practicing gunsmith for many years. He developed several accessories for muzzle loading shooters, and was always willing to share his knowledge of shooting with all interested persons. He was not only a shooter himself for years, but he did much to promote muzzle loading shooting throughout the northeast. We could do with more people like Charlie Demport in this world, for he had the ability to see things clearly and, I believe, made this world a little better place for those of us who shared the results of his work, which was also his hobby.

Baldwinsville, New York.
August 4, 1972

Malcolm Mac Pherson, Jr.

CHARLES T. DEMPORT

Charles Heidenfelder, later known as Charles T. Demport, was born in Essen, Germany on January 16, 1880, the son of Emil and Marie Heidenfelder. His diary traces the subsequent movements of the family. It does not mention his grandfather, a Krupp employee in Germany, who came to this country about 1883, but stayed only a year until he returned to the old country.

"My parents left Germany March 13, 1882 for the United States, arriving in New York on the last day of March. Then we went to Chicago and lived there about six months. Then we moved to Chichester, N. Y. There for nearly four years we lived in the woods, four miles from the nearest neighbor. Then we moved to Roundout, now Kingston, N. Y., April 16, 1886.

"There was where I learned my first English and ABC's. We moved to Adams, N. Y. October 2, 1888. We moved to Syracuse, N. Y. September 8, 1889. We moved to Elbridge, N. Y. March 20, 1891. Here my mother died December 26, 1891 at the age of 34 years, 10 months and 24 days. Was buried on the last day of the year at the Elbridge Cemetery.

"Then we moved to Warner, N. Y. January 20, 1892. My sister kept house for us. I left school in March 1893. I went to work in the Warner Portland Cement Works. I was eager to learn a trade, and had many good offers to continue work in the machine shop, but my father opposed to it, on account that I would not earn him enough money. This made me feel down-hearted, and contemplated running away; he found employment for me on a farm for the rest of the summer."

Here we have the first intimation of dissention between Charlie and his father. Charlie stated to me that his father was a drunkard, and misused the family. He disliked his father so much that after discharge from the Army he had his name changed, and attempted to have his brother Herman also change his name. He had a brother and two sisters, all younger than himself, and all born in the United States. The brother, now deceased, lived in Oklahoma. The diary continues:

"Then I took up hunting and trapping; I bought 50 set of traps, and borrowed a gun of a neighbor, and started out October 1, 1893. I set my traps along the streams for minks, musk-rats, and skunks. My route was from three to five miles long. Every morning at 4:30 I started out to look after my traps. I always carried my rifle with me except in stormy weather. Skunks were quite abundant, muskrats were not so plentiful and mink was scarce, but altogether it was quite profitable for two months. January set in very stormy and compelled me to take up my traps.

"Then I went to work in a teasel shop of Mr. George H. Gregory, Jr. in Skaneateles January 18, 1894." The teasel is a plant with prickly flower heads that were used to raise the nap on woolen cloth. They were mounted on a board and used to scuff up the surface, which was then trimmed with a long pair of shears. Charlie told me that this shop was on West Lake Road, an area immediately to the west of Skaneateles Lake, just south of the village of Skaneateles. He worked at trimming and packaging teasels, among other things, while he worked there. "I worked there a long time, but my father drew all my wages. This again made me discouraged, but had a few friends so I run away to make a change as this made bitter feelings between my father and I. I left the teasel shop March 9, 1896, determined to shift for myself. I started out with 30 cents. I went to a friend Mr. John Impson and stayed there until I found work.

"I went to work on a farm for Mr. Herbert F. Smith on March 16, 1896. Here the money question was settled, and help came at last. He (Charlie's father) came twice to Mr. Smith to collect my wages but was refused each time by Mr. Snith. The last time I threatened to sue for a guardian. Then from that time he left me alone. I began to save money, and made many friends so I always called Skaneateles my home."

Apparently this Herbert Smith was the man who gave Charlie his first real chance in life. From Charlie's account this man found him in an almost destitute condition,

poorly fed and clothed, and gave him his first real home. Even today Charlie speaks with deep feeling about Mr. Smith.

At about this time Charlie was to become acquainted with another man destined to be of great benefit to him, a Mr. Don Simons. He had been a school teacher, but deafness at his acvanced age had made it impossible for him to handle a classroom, and he was working as a farmhand. Mr. Simons spent a great deal of time with Charlie and invested him with a knowledge of mathematics that he had not been able to acquire in his limited term of schooling. This knowledge was later invaluable to Charlie in some of the types of work that he encountered.

"I worked there (with Mr. Smith) until December 4th, 1897. On that day I went to Mr. Impson's and stayed there for a while. I then found work hauling logs for Mr. Dean Smith from February 2nd, 1898 to March 31st, 1898. I went to work on a farm for Mr. Joseph Panes April 1st, 1898 and while working there the Spanish war broke out.

"Thinking that I would like to go to the war I left my job May 9th, 1898 and went to Syracuse to enlist, but was rejected on account of being too young. Returning to Skaneateles I went to Mr. Herbert F. Smith's and stayed there six days. I commenced work on a farm in Owasco, N. Y. May 16, 1898 for Mr. A. S. Chamberlain. I worked there for fifteen months, and still thinking I would like to go to war which was then going on in the Philippines, I left Mr. Chamberlain's August 9, 1899 and went to Utica, N. Y. to enlist and was again rejected.

"I returned to Owasco August 22nd, 1899 and boarded with Mr. Albert Flesher and worked by the day for nearly three months. I went to Plainville November 18th, 1899 and worked for Mr. J. H. Mills. I stripped tobacco for two weeks and handled logs the rest of the time. I went to Skaneateles March 9th, 1900 and worked on a farm for Mr. C. S. Cuddeback for eight months beginning March 26th. When my time was out I went to board with Mr. Flesher again and drove team for Mr. A. S. Ogden from November 1st to December 14th, 1900.

"I went to Mr. H. F. Smith's again and stayed there a while, as I thought of trying to enlist again, as the war was still going on in the Philippines. I did nothing but visit a few friends until January 15th, 1901. Mr. Smith took me to the train. I went to Noblesbrough to see my brother Herman. I left the train at Prospect, I took the stage for Grant, which was eight miles. I stoped at the hotel over night, and took the stage the next day for Noblesbrough 20 miles from Grant. I arrived there at 6 PM. My brother and I had a good

time all evening. The next morning I went to see a lumber camp 20 miles north of Noblesbrough. We had a good team and a pair of bobs. The entire trip was through a dense forest of evergreens; we got there late that night. There was where I learned how logs were handled on a big scale. The next morning I went back to where my brother worked.

"I went to Syracuse January 19th, 1901 to see my sister Rosa, then we went to Split Rock to see my sister Mary. Then I went to visit a few friends in Warner. I went to Syracuse February 3rd, 1901 and applied for enlistment. I passed examination but as there was a mistake made in my age, the recruiting officer called my father to the office and he signed the papers that my age was 21 instead of 20. I was at the hotel at the time so we did not see each other. My father was anxious to see me, and I was glad not to see him, as I had not seen him since August 18th, 1898.

"I was sworn in February 9, 1901. I took the train that night at 11 PM for Columbus, Ohio. I was stationed there ten days. On February 20th, 1901 an army of five hundred men left for the Presidio of San Francisco, California. We arrived there the 25th. There I was assigned to Troop D, 15th Cavalry. We had round tents 18 feet in diameter and six men in a tent. We were in camp 37 days. Then we moved to the brick barracks on the 25th of March, 1901. We were there six days. We embarked for the Philippine Islands April 1st, 1901 via Honolulu, H. I. and Guam, on the transport Buford."

Charlie's diary says that they arrived in the Philippines on May 11, 1901. However, it wasn't until June 18 that they unloaded their horses at Oroquieta, on the west shore of Iligan Bay, which is on the north shore of Mindanao Island. The horses were jumped into the bay from a platform five feet above the water and swam in to shore. Charlie comments, "It's a very rough way to handle the poor horses, but it could not be helped." He says that one horse was drowned. It appears that the troop moved around somewhat, as he writes at one place that he nearly drowned while swimming his horse across a river near Manila. However, most of his service was in the Lake Laneo district on Mindanao, and among other duties they made numerous scouts against the Moros.

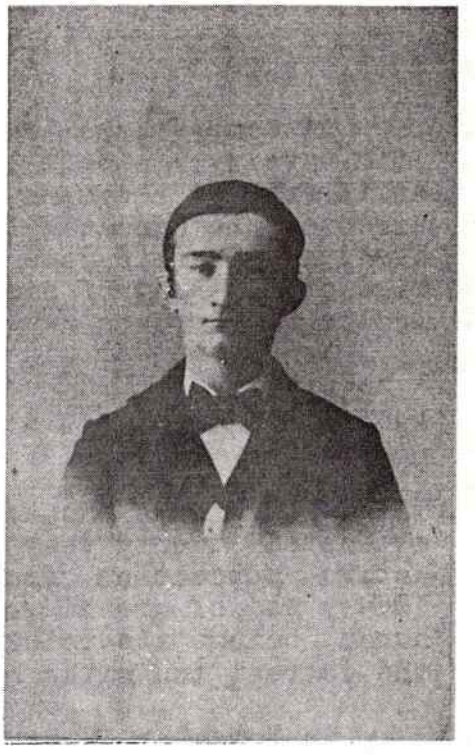
John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, afterward Commanding General of the A.E.F. during WWI, was assigned to active duty in the Philippines in 1899 with the Adjutant General in Civil Administration. On August 20, 1901 he was transferred to the 15th Cavalry as staff officer. On October 11 he broke away from desk duty and was given command of the post at Iligan. In the Spring of 1902 he went to Camp Vicars as a staff officer, and on June 30 he was appointed to command that post.

At Camp Vicars Pershing commanded five troops of the 15th Cavalry, a battalion of the 27th Infantry, a battery of artillery and a company of engineers. With these troops he directed the Mindanao Island campaign against the Moros. In his diary Charlie does not give many details of his Army service or name any of his officers, but most of the time he was in the Philippines he was in the Lake Laneo district and for at least a part of his service was under Pershing's command. A newspaper clipping concerning WWII quotes Charlie as saying that six months of his Philippine service was under Pershing. His troop was on duty for a time at a cholera camp late in 1902. On November 1, 1902 they began work on a road from Iligan to Lake Lanao. This was a job that the Spanish had attempted twenty years before, but had abandoned because of active opposition from the natives. Charlie comments that "Every rod of ground was baptized in blood. Today skulls of human beings are to be found in numbers, and it is no doubt the dearest ten miles of railroad ever built in the world."

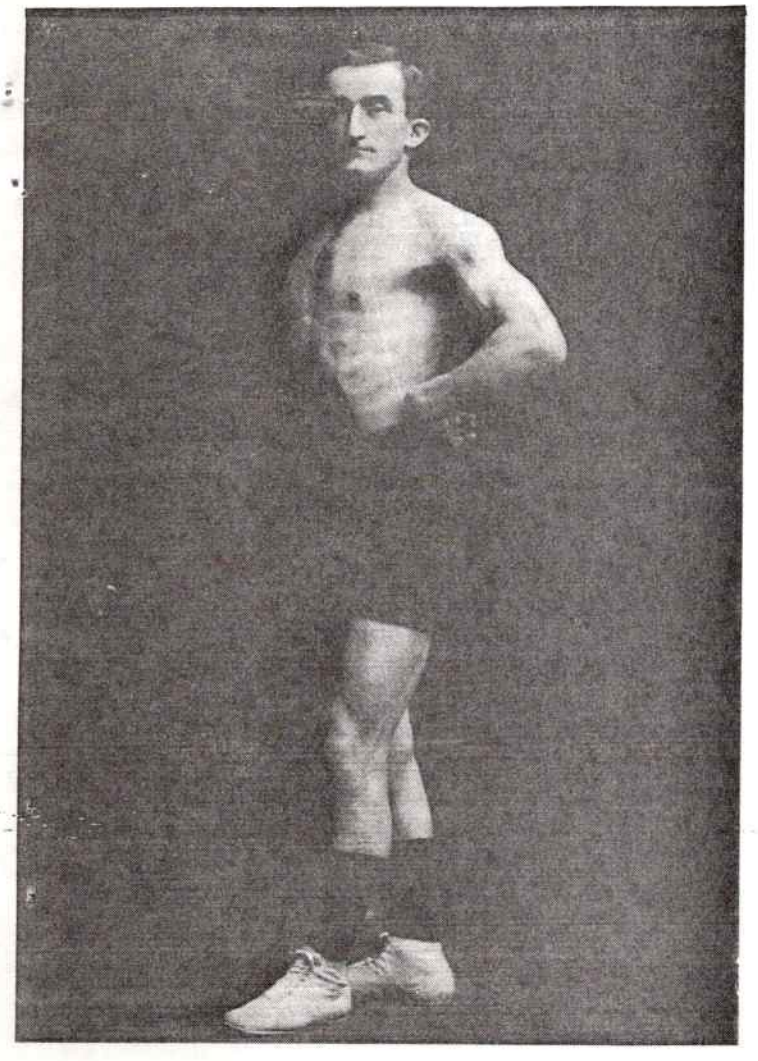
On November 17 he notes "After supper we had to clean our saddles to get ready to escort General Miles up from the dock," which they did the following day. General Nelson A. Miles was Commanding General of the Army, and was making a last inspection tour of the Army before retirement.

The road to Lake Lanao was completed April 28 with the erection of a suspension bridge. Charlie comments that the "work progressed slowly," and that it was drudgery. At the end of his hitch he returned to the States with no fanfare, except that he almost overstayed his shore leave in Honolulu on the return trip, and made the boat by jumping from the dock to the ship when it was eight feet out. He was discharged on February 8, 1904, with 32 months of service in the Philippines. As the war with Spain was not yet ended Charlie is a Spanish American War veteran; as of 1972 one of two living in Syracuse.

When Charlie got out of the Army he seemed to be at loose ends, as so many veterans have been before and since. In his diary, in the only entry in red ink he wrote, "March 5 I returned to Skaneateles." This must have been a red letter day to Charlie, for in several places he comments that he considers Skaneateles his home. For a time he stayed and worked at a variety of places; in fact, during the year he stayed at sixteen different homes. For a time he worked at odd jobs and day labor or farm work. On June 13 he left for Chicago on the Grand Circuit with race horses for Mr. George Castle. On September 26, near St. John, Michigan, he was nearly involved in a train wreck, although no damage was done. Two trains headed together on the same track, but stopped while they were separated by the space between two



CHARLES T. DEMPORT
1896



CHARLES T. DEMPORT
N.Y.S. WRESTLING CHAMP
1907

telegraph poles. On October 15 the tour was over and he returned to Skaneateles.

He stayed with the Impsons and Smiths for the rest of the year and during the early months of 1905. While he was in the Army he had done some wrestling, and he resumed this on February 2, 1905, when he gave his first exhibition of catch-as-catch-can wrestling in a bout with Elmer Beebe. Beebe was a local boy who Charlie used to pal around with, but he lost both matches to Charlie. Charlie continued as a professional wrestler until 1912. He said he did not remember how much he was paid, but he never made expenses doing it. They trained at the Pastime Athletic Club, and usually wrestled at the Alhambra Theater in Syracuse, although occasionally they had a match in some other nearby city. On January 16, 1908 he met Frank Gotch, World Champion catch-as-catch-can wrestler, who gave Charlie advice and encouragement in the game. Charlie became Lightweight Champion of Syracuse and a photograph in his possession, dated 1907, is entitled "Charles Demport, Lightweight Champion of New York State. Born January 16, 1880." He was a member of the Pastime Athletic Club off and on until about 1918, after which time I find no further reference to it.

Charlie considered the Impsons great friends, John's wife, Sarah Jane Weeks Impson in particular. He still carries a picture of her in his wallet, and commented to me that she was a beautiful woman. She was killed tragically on October 28, 1906, in a farm accident, when she was only 33 years old In 1905 when Charlie decided to have his name changed he asked her to select a name for him, and she selected the name Davenport. When she wrote it down on a sheet of paper for him she spelled it Demport. When Charlie looked at it he commented that it wasn't the way to spell Davenport. She was embarrassed about it and said, "Well, change it." Charlie said, "No, I think that is a good name. We'll leave it the way it is," so the name Demport was entirely accidental. On March 27, 1905 he went to Syracuse and had his name legally changed to Charles Thomas Demport. He never used the name Thomas in its entirety. His letterhead was always Charles T. and that is the way he always signed his name.

On June 18 he returned to the Grand Circuit with Mr. Castle, but on July 27 he quit Castle and opened a harness shop. He says that this shop was his own, but apparently it was with another owner on the Grand Circuit, a Mr. E.F. Gurs, for he records that on September 16 he quit the circuit and stayed in Syracuse. This experience did not satisfy his liking for change, for over the next few years he changed jobs often. It was not until he quit wrestling about 1912

that he settled down at all.

During these years he worked many times for either Solvay Process or Semet-Solvay; these were not separate companies, but divisions of the same company located at Solvay, N. Y. His first work with them was on November 16, when he worked as a rigger for Solvay Process. He quit December 26. This was the pattern for a long time; he would take rather extended vacations and go hunting or fishing, or just traveling. He never seemed to have trouble in finding work when he came back, and was rehired by the same companies time after time. In 1920 Semet-Solvay wrote a very nice recommendation for Charlie when he applied for a passport to visit Europe. They said that he had been employed by them since 1905, but this was by no means continuous employment.

On January 9, 1906 he went to work for Pass & Seymour as a kiln setter, but quit May 9. On the 13 of May he went back to Solvay Process as a machinist helper. On May 28 he notes "Made permanent helper to David Sklatt in the blacksmith shop at Solvay Process Company." It was for this reason that from then on he was billed as "The Solvay Blacksmith" in his wrestling bouts.

On September 29 he started boarding with John Seidemann at 223 Charles Avenue, his first contact with Charles Avenue. A note in one of his letters dated October 7, 1966 says, "60 years ago today I came to Solvay." I believe that his memory was in error about this, for he had worked there before that date in 1906, and the above note in his diary shows that he had also lived there earlier that year.

On October 23 he quit Solvay Process and went to work for Pass & Seymour again, but returned to Solvay Process repairing pumps on December 6. On December 21, 1906 he went to board with Walter Rolfe at 405 Woods Road in Solvay. This was apparently his first contact with the Rolfe family, but was to be one which lasted for many years.

His next note about his work is on November 26 when, "I gave up blacksmithing to learn the machinist trade." On December 11, "I was sent to the caustic soda liquer plant on repairs; dirtiest place in the works." Apparently he did not like this work, for he quit again on December 16.

This seems to have been one of his periodic vacations, for he "went rabbit hunting" on January 11. In February he went to Warners and cut ice for a farmer. During this time he was wrestling, and also doing some refereeing of wrestling matches. On April 20, 1907 his diary notes: "I visited Mr. Weeks again, where I have made my home since I was a boy."

This is the first reference to this man, who was undoubtedly the father of Sarah Jane Weeks Impson. On November 13 he noted that he refereed a preliminary bout. This was his first reference to his acting as a referee, but on March 18, 1908, he "Refereed a world championship match between Charles Kaiser and Jack Haley."

Charlie did continue to wrestle until 1912. The last reference to a bout was on March 13 of that year, when he was thrown against a bench and broke some ribs. He won most of his matches, but lost a few, mostly due to taking on overweight competitors or because of injury. He continued to referee bouts until 1918. The last reference I find to any connection with the sport was when he ran for Vice President of the Pastime Athletic Club in that year. On March 17, 1917 he had an operation on his nose to remove a broken bone. This was well past his wrestling career, but I believe that this operation was to correct an old wrestling injury.

On July 2, 1908 he went to work for Syracuse Chilled Plow shop. This was one of his short term employments, for he quit July 3. During the rest of the month he worked as a farm hand, but on August 1 he started work for Solvay Process as a machinist. On a couple of weekends in October he "went chestnutting in Baldwinsville." He made no notation of quitting Solvay Process, but on January 7, 1909 he "Worked for Frazer & Jones Machine Shop. Fired January 8 - not skilled enough." On February 19 he worked for Smith Typewriter on a tapping machine, but quit on April 3. Two days later he returned to Solvay Process as a machinist, and from then on he appears to have been regularly employed, and he makes few comments about his work. There are several references in the diary to hunting trips, including one to the North Woods, which is what everyone called the Adirondacks in those days. On October 10, 1910 he was made Assistant Repair Foreman at Semet-Solvay Company. Up to this time most of his references have been to Solvay Process, but from here until his retirement he worked for Semet-Solvay almost continuously. About the only comment he makes concerning his work is some time in 1913, when he got his left sleeve caught in a lathe. "Presence of mind and an old frock saved my arm."

During a part of his employment at Semet-Solvay Charlie was what is known as a "lead burner," a trade designation little known to the general public. A lead burner had the same relationship to sheet lead as a tinsmith had to tin plate. He fabricated sheet lead into usable forms by welding, and welding lead is a rather delicate business. As a result of this work he obtained Patent No.1,176,135 on March 21, 1916 for a "Method of covering earthenware cocks with lead." To quote from the patent papers, "My invention

C. DEMPORT.

METHOD OF COVERING EARTHENWARE COCKS WITH LEAD.

APPLICATION FILED JAN. 8, 1916.

1,176,135.

Patented Mar. 21, 1916.

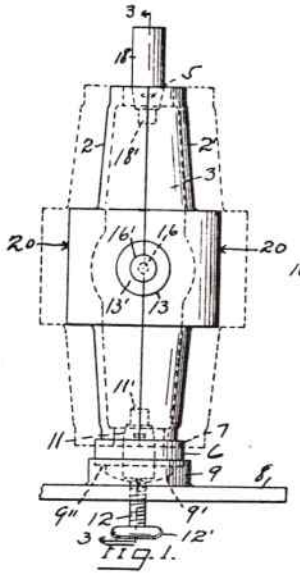


Fig. 1.

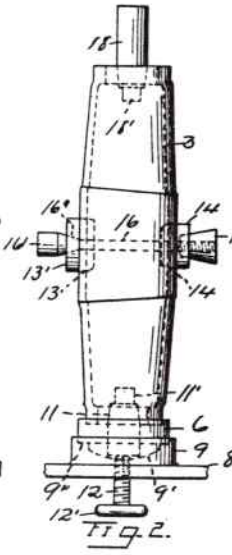


Fig. 2.

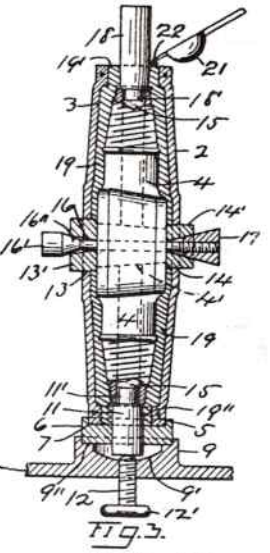


Fig. 3.

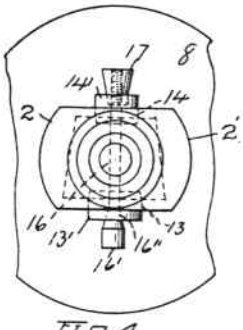
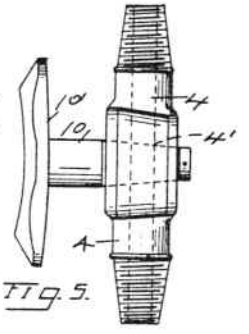


Fig. 4.



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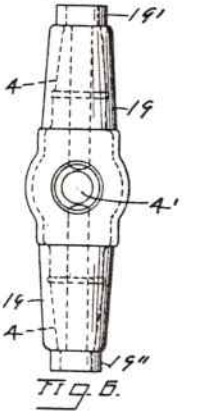


Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

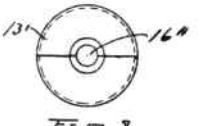


Fig. 8.

WITNESS
Walter L. Day

INVENTOR.
CHARLES DEMPORT
BY Harry D. Wallace
ATTORNEY.

relates to earthenware cocks employed in connection with the manufacture and handling of nitric, sulfuric, and other acids, and has for its object to provide an improved method of coating or covering such cocks, with lead, whereby the cocks are suitably reinforced and protected, and may also be conveniently and readily connected to the lead pipes usually employed for conducting the acids to and from the cocks.

"To the accomplishment of the foregoing the invention consists primarily in adjustably disposing the earthenware cocks in suitable molds, and then pouring molten lead into the molds for casting leaden jackets or shells upon and around the whole cocks at a single operation instead of applying sheet lead in a number of pieces to the cocks, as heretofore practised." The earthenware cocks were heated before the lead was poured to prevent their cracking, and the interior of the cocks was filled with sand to prevent them from filling with the molten lead. After the cocks had served their usefulness the lead was reclaimed and re-molded. Of course, as their employee, the patent was assigned to Semet-Solvay.

The company was using the acid which made this invention necessary to make nitroglycerine. Their plant for this manufacture was at Split Rock, and Charlie speaks of going to Split Rock at times. An explosion there while this plant was operating killed about 90 men, but fortunately Charlie was in the main plant that day. His connection with this process is confirmed On October 5, 1920 by a letter from Semet-Solvay Company to Congressman Walter Magee, asking him to expedite issuance of a passport to Charlie that he might visit England. He had applied for a passport and been issued one, but the British had refused a visa because of his German birth. The letter says, "I believe that our opinion of his American Citizenship is well illustrated by the fact that we employed him throughout the war in a part of our plant which was devoted largely to the manufacture of munitions and that we had every confidence in his integrity and loyalty."

On December 1, 1917 his diary notes, "I was relieved of the position of repair foreman and went to work drafting." He has two photographs taken about 1918 at Semet-Solvay. In the first one Charlie appears with a number of other men, all in business suits, and is identified as "Demport - Mechanical Draftsman." The other is obviously of the shop force from their attire, and Charlie appears in the center of the front row, and is as well dressed as the rest with a vest and suit coat on, although it is obviously dirty and wrinkled - his working attire. Apparently as draftsman Charlie did work that is above the average draftsman, such as the redesign of pumps and things of that nature.

CHARLES T. DEMPORT
1918

CHARLES T. DEMPORT
N.Y.S. MUZZLE LOADING RIFLE CHAMP
1959

This exchange of employment was caused by a health problem. On January 14, 1918 he notes in the diary, "Eyes examined - dizzyness." This was the start of a long period of eye trouble that followed him most of the rest of his life. From 1918 to 1925 he lost a good deal of time at work and had different types of eyeglasses with little apparent relief. He was examined by numerous doctors, but there is no indication that any of them found the cause of or a solution for his poor health. Some of his friends now tell me that he had some kind of poisoning from his lead burning or from some chemicals used in the manufacture of nitroglycerine. Although Charlie now says that this was not the case, it seems probable that it must have been something of this nature. It did not seem to affect his vision, as he had remarkably good eyesight up into his seventies, when he shot some remarkable scores with muzzle loading rifles offhand.

In 1921 he transferred to the Industrial Lab. at Solvay Process Company, but on August 1, 1922 he transferred back to Semet-Solvay, and continued there until his retirement. On February 15, 1923 he joined Camp Butler Post 86, Spanish War Veterans. These are about the only entries in the diary until January 1, 1925, when he writes, "Quit Semet-Solvay Company to take a years rest with view of improving my health." On February 25 of that year he was granted a pension for his Army service. He did not keep many records of his activities during the following three years, but he did work at times. In August 1926 he worked for Semet-Solvay at least three days. One entry says, "welding coil, doing some lead burning & making a doz. one pint copper bottles."

During all these years he had boarded with the Rolfes, and from 1925 to 1928 he traveled extensively with them, and also did some hunting and fishing. At one time during this period he kept ferrets. By this time it was illegal to hunt rabbits with these animals, and apparently Charlie did not do so. What he kept them for was to kill rats, and did clean out the rats from various farms and business establishments. On February 23, 1927 he had his tonsils removed at Good Shepherd Hospital in Syracuse. On September 12 he went by train to Camp Perry, Ohio, "to see the rifle shoot being held there." He has told me and others of his friends that he attended Camp Perry thirteen times as a competitor. This appears to have been his first trip there, and he could hardly have been a competitor that year, as he returned to Solvay on September 15. From October 8 to November 12 he built an addition to Otto Ramsing's garage at 125 Charles Avenue in Solvay.

On April 5, 1928 Charlie bought a house and lot 40 by 123 feet at 123 Charles Avenue in Solvay, New York, paying

$5700 cash for the property. Charles Avenue is a short street, only a few blocks long, and this lot is near the middle of these blocks, and on the east side of the street. On April 12 he started building a garage and workshop where he was to operate his business for many years. The lot being narrow, a driveway along the north side of the lot and the house took up all the room, and the shop was built in the rear. The building was also nearly the full width of the lot, being 24 feet deep and 36 feet long. It was 11 feet to the plate, with a 1/3 pitch roof with two ventilators. He built the shop entirely by himself, and precut all the material for it. As the material was cut it was stored in an old shed that was on the lot, so that when the concrete floor was poured the building was ready to be put together. He said, "There was none of this business of holding a board up and marking both ends and making it fit."

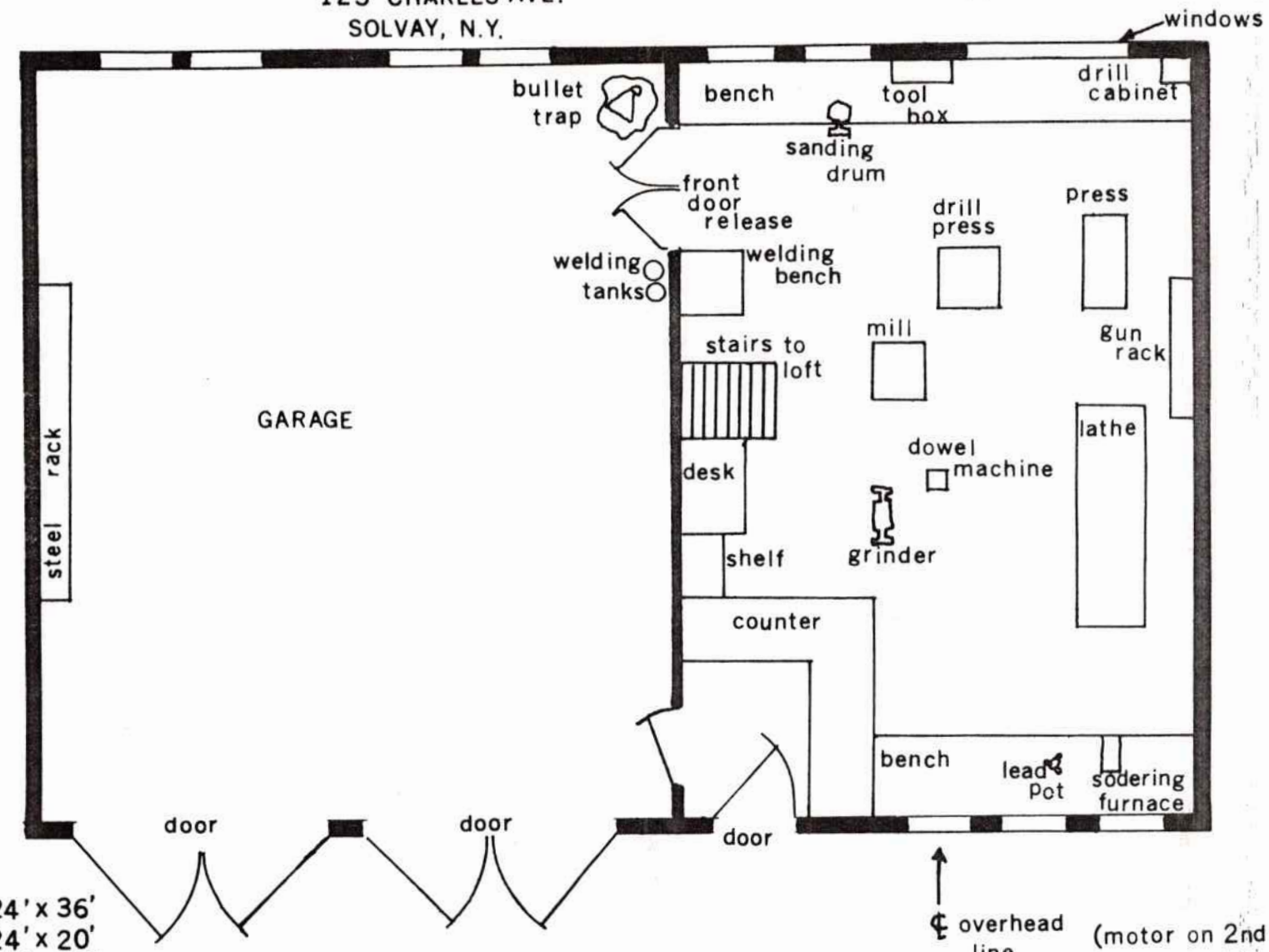
The construction of the two parts of the building is somewhat different. There is a loft over the shop, but none over the garage. The garage roof is supported by a truss framed of metal rods, so that part of the building is open. There are two windows on each end of the building on the second floor level for light. At ground level the building is right up against other buildings, so windows on the ground floor were of no advantage. The windows are hinged at the top and swing out for ventilation.

On September 3 he installed lights, a 15 inch by 7 foot lathe, a No. 4 Burke mill, a 20 inch drill press, a three burner gas oven and a 40 ton press. The drill press, milling machine and lathe were run by a single line shaft which ran from front to back of the shop, and not quite in the center of the room. This was driven by a motor in the loft through a belt that ran through the upper floor at the rear of the shop.

There was no direct access to the shop proper from the front. The shop was on the south side of the building, the garage on the north. A door in the front of the building in the southwest corner of this room gave access to a vestibule about four by five feet in size. This was separated from the shop proper by a counter about 18 inches wide and 4 feet high. A door on the left of this vestibule led into the garage. The front door was about normal size, or 6'8" by 3', but the door into the garage was only 6'2" by 28"; of course this was high enough for Charlie. There was no latch or knob on this door. At the back of the shop Charlie had a release, and only when this was pulled could the door from the vestibule to the garage be opened. When released it closed and locked automatically. Anyone allowed to pass through this door found a set of double doors at the rear of the garage

CHARLES DEMPORT'S SHOP
123 CHARLES AVE.
SOLVAY, N.Y.

scale 1/4" = 1'



BUILDING 24' x 36'
GARAGE 24' x 20'
SHOP 24' x 16'

℄ overhead line shaft (motor on 2nd floor in back)

DR RUSSELL BURTCH

that gave access to the working area of the shop. These double doors not only allowed people to walk into the shop, but were wide enough to allow bulky things to be brought into the shop.

Access to the working area was reserved for Charlie's close friends, and not for casual customers. One man, however, who often came into the shop did not appreciate this arrangement, and would put his hand on the counter and vault over into the shop. Charlie called his attention to the fact that he did not want people coming into the shop that way, but it did not take effect. Eventually Charlie got tired of this performance and made a trip on the counter that let it break away under any stress. The next time the gentleman vaulted the counter it gave way under his hand and he landed on the concrete floor on his back. Charlie just turned around and looked at him and quietly said, "There, Captain, you won't vault over that again." That was typical of the way Charlie did things.

There was a bullet trap in his garage, and also a large chunk of wood. The bullet trap was used to test guns. If Charlie thought that the trap would not stand the gaff of the load he was testing he fired into the block of wood. I have a feeling that things must have jingled in there when he fired some of the high powered rifles that I know he worked on. Also in the garage were his gas tanks for welding. The hoses were run through the wall so that he could do the welding in the shop.

His friends who were familiar with the shop tell me that everything that Charlie had was redesigned. If there was a latch on the garage door Charlie had revised it in some way to make it work better; everything that he had around the shop had been worked over and worked very smoothly and easily. There was no bearing noise or any other unnecessary noise when the machinery was running. Everything was kept lubricated and worked like a fine watch.

Strangely enough, for one who had his machinery in that shape, the shop, including the counter separating the vestibule from the shop, was cluttered to say the least. There was no bench space that was not piled high with something. The work bench across the back of the shop had metal drawers. When he wanted to work on a gun he would pull these drawers out and lay the gun right across their sharp edges. That was the only place he had to lay anything down.

His tools were always in good order and good repair, although not terribly well organized sometimes. Charlie would lend tools to people. When he did he took a deposit of money

equal to the value of the tool. If the tool was returned before he needed to use it he refunded the money. If he wanted to use it he took the money and bought a new tool, and then he had one and the borrower had one.

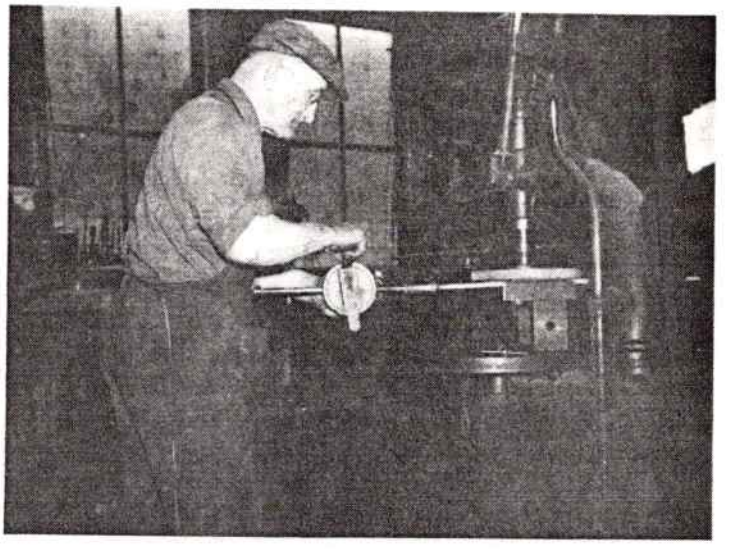
One of the machines on the rear bench was an electric motor that he used with various attachments. On it was a drum that he had acquired from a defunct shoeshop, which he used as a sanding drum, but he also used it with sanding discs, abrasive cut-off wheels and other similar things. It was unguarded, and there were no rests; he went at everything freehand. What polishing he did was done on this machine. One day one of his friends came in with a depth micrometer that he had picked up second-hand. It had a little patina type rust on the thimble. Charlie looked it over, grabbed it, and walked over to the polishing motor and laid it right on. When he had finished the rust was gone, but so were some of the graduations. That too was the way Charlie did things.

Charlie was one of the best gas welders in the country. Doubtless his skill had been acquired in his lead burning days at Semet-Solvay. He seldom would repair a gun by ordering new parts, but would weld the part that was broken, reheat treat it and make it functional.

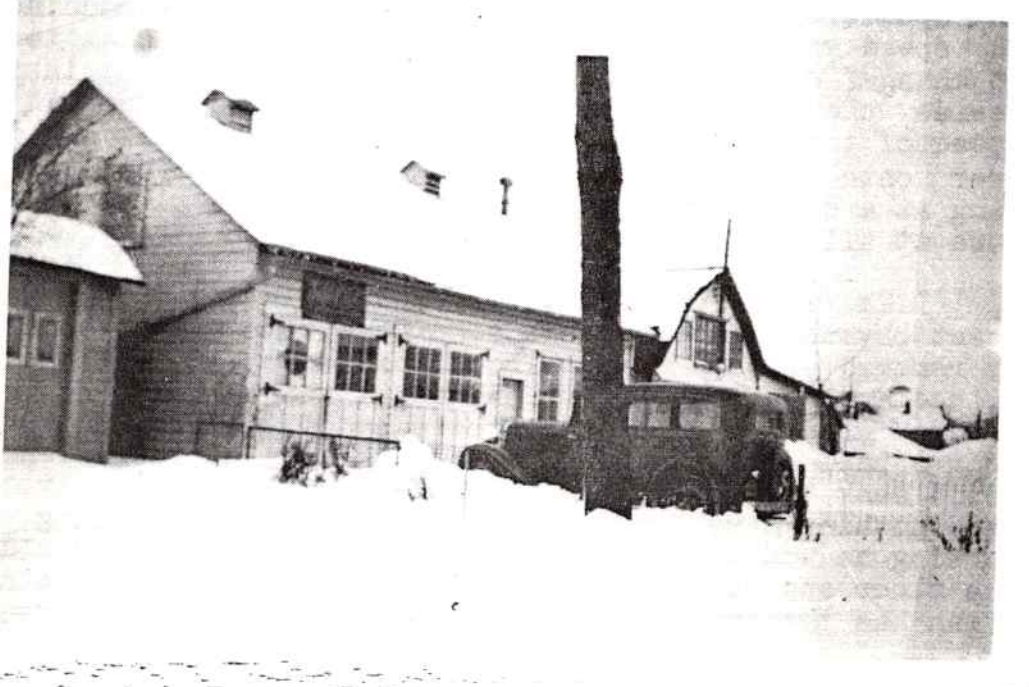
One of his friends told me that one of the most interesting things he had ever seen in the shop was Charlie changing speeds on his drill press. It was a large machine, and the speed was regulated by step pulleys. When Charlie wanted to change speeds he would crouch, then jump up in the air beside the press until he had accelerated himself to the speed of the belt. He would then grab the belt and pull it over onto the sheave he wanted to use and it would be running at a different speed as smoothly as you please, with no fuss at all.

Like many men of his time, Charlie did things with the least physical labor possible. Some time ago he told me how he removed breech plugs from muzzle loading rifle barrels. He had a barrel vise in which he put the barrel. He then put a three foot wrench over the tang of the breech plug, and hung a pail of metal hardware on the end of the wrench. He would soak the plug with penetrating oil occasionally, but he did nothing else but let the wrench hang on the plug. Some morning he would go out to the shop and the pail would be on the floor and the breech plug would be loose. Assuming that a man has the time, that type of approach is very effective.

Charlie made wooden ramrods; when he went to shoots he always had a bundle of them in the car. He had a doweling machine that he ran hardwood squares through and made rounds



CHARLES T, DEMPORT MAKING
RAM RODS IN HIS SHOP



GUN SHOP BUILT BY CHARLES T. DEMPORT
AT 125 CHARLES AVE., SOLVAY

of different diameters. He then set up a disc sander running horizontally in the drill press. He had a half-round channel in a fixture that held the rod, which he turned with a breast drill while running it under the disc sander. This brought the rod to diameter and smoothed it up in one operation. He never finished them up very well; he allowed that gave the buyer something to do.

Another of his friends tells me that what he remembers best about the shop were the signs on the walls. One said, "The customer is always, almost right," another, "The Hurrier I go the behinder I get." Still another, "Foolish Question Number 1. 'Charlie, are you busy'?"

There is no question that Charlie did not initially start a gun shop. He started a machine shop and did all kinds of industrial work, bearing work, welding, all kinds of repair work from car radiators to lawn mowers to sharpening scissors. There was a tremendous variety in the work he did, and he always did some gun work. However, up to 1938 there are very few references to gun work in his books, only two or three entries a month. Progressively as time went on he did more and more gun work until in the 1960's he did practically nothing but gun work. In the early days he did more work and had more income from the shop, but 1960 was probably the high point in his career as a gunsmith in terms of the amount of work done. He has in his possession a complete set of Federal Firearms Dealer licenses from 1939 to 1971, but only one gunsmith license. This is for the years 1970-71, and apparently was to conform to the New Federal Firearms Act of 1968. I believe that as a dealer he was not required to have a gunsmith license before that time. His accounts of business begin in 1938, and I presume to meet Federal requirements.

He kept a roll of paper on two wooden dowels in a box on which he recorded the jobs as they came in, took orders for work and made notes about the jobs. In a book he called his day book he recorded the jobs and the date and amount paid. He also had a series of books headed separately as rifles pistols and shotguns in which he recorded the work done on each type, broken down daily, weekly, etc. It is probable that until about 1940 most of Charlie's gun work was on cartridge guns. He himself did not, so far as I can find out, do much muzzle loading shooting until that time, and probably took it up because of the shortage of fixed ammunition after the start of World War Two. His books indicate that he did work on cartridge guns extensively, including chambering some barrels for military conversions. I find no indication that Charlie did any woodwork, or had any woodworking tools, and I believe that he probably never made a complete muzzle

loading rifle.

I have heard people say, "Charlie isn't a skillful gunsmith, but he is a knowing gunsmith." This is probably true. He had a limited amount of formal schooling, but he was a whiz at mathematics, and loved to use math on any and all occasions.

Charlie had a reputation for universally giving everyone Hell when they came into his shop, regardless of who they were or why they came in. After he had chewed them out he would begin to go into their problems, preferably something concerning mathematics, and in about five minutes he had the customer joined out. Nobody left the shop without being a friend.

Charlie's shop was burglarized in 1942 or 1943. His good records of the description and serial numbers of the guns taken enabled the authorities to recover at least a part of them, and apprehend some of the thieves. The shop had a burglar alarm system at that time, but it operated on batteries, and as no batteries were available during the war they had not been replaced and were dead. The morning after the burglary Charlie asked Otto Ramsing to attach the alarm system to his light system. This alarm did not ring in the shop, but in his bedroom, which was on the rear of the house overlooking the shop. He also had a switch there to turn on all the lights in the shop and a floodlight outside to illuminate the yard. It was Charlie's intention to see that any future burglars did not get out of the yard. There is no doubt that he would have shot them, but fortunately the opportunity did not arise.

Charlie habitually carried a revolver. This was not because of this burglary, as he began the practice about the time he opened his shop in 1928. He had a canvas holster sewed into his right front trouser pocket which held the gun in position and handy to his right hand. The revolver was a Colt Police Positive model, with a 2½ inch barrel, with fixed sights, in .32 Colt New Police caliber. He had built up the hammer spur of the revolver with a piece of brass or copper tubing that curled backward enough to prevent the hammer spur from catching in his trousers when he pulled the gun out of his pocket. This spur was not long enough to prevent cocking the gun, and was not welded on permanently. When I questioned Charlie about this revolver he gave me the information about it and then went over to his bed and pulled the revolver out from under the blankets. It was fully loaded with .32 S & W cartridges. When I looked into the cylinder he said, "Those are not the correct shells, but they are heavy enough for my purposes now." The added hammer spur is not on

the revolver now, and it appears to be a standard gun just as it came from the factory. The gun is badly worn; the Colt medallions on the sides of the grips are so worn that they are not identifiable. The surface finish of the gun is badly pitted, but clean. It has seen a lot of hard use, and is not in very good shape now. Apparently Charlie no longer carries the revolver, but keeps it fully loaded in his room. The only evidence that he ever used the gun is in an undated newspaper clipping on one of his scrapbooks: "Charles Demport displays 31 inch snake believed to be a deadly poisonous copperhead which he shot while at the Split Rock Rifle Range off Onondaga Road yesterday. Demport used one shot from his .32 caliber pistol to kill the snake."

When he was in business Charlie always carried large sums of money. This money was in one or two billfolds, and was put in the billfolds just as he received it, with large bills and singles all mixed together. When he wanted to make change he would have to sort through it to find bills of the proper denomination. It is more likely that he carried the revolver for this reason than because of the burglary. In addition to having the holster in his front pocket, Charlie must have had his trouser pockets altered. Whenever he wanted anything from his pockets he would grab the outside just above his knee and run his other hand down into the pocket up to his elbow, and come up with whatever it was he wanted.

The only note about his shop in his diary for some time is that on March 23, 1931 his face was badly burned when a tank which he was repairing in the shop exploded. For years he had boarded with Walter Rolfe, who was a security guard at the Solvay Process plant. In the summer of 1931 he and his wife moved into Charlie's house at 123 Charles Avenue. They lived there until October 1, 1933, when they left for Florida and Charlie rented the house to Leonard Willm. Walter Rolfe died in the fall of 1934 and Mrs. Rolfe came back to Syracuse and lived with her son Charles for a few days. Then, at Charlie's request, she came to keep house for him on January 18, 1935.

Mrs. Edith Rolfe was born in England on April 7, 1875. Pictures of her family in Charlie's possession indicate that hers was a good family; the family members are well dressed with gentlemen in uniform prominent among them. I believe that the family was well to do financially. She had two sons by Walter Rolfe, Sidney, born in 1897 was a WWI veteran, and Charles, born in 1901. She had at least one grandson, Richard, the son of Charles. Charlie's diary says: "After Mrs. Rolfe had kept house for me about a year I asked her to marry me. Her answer was, 'I think a little too soon.' How-

CHARLES AND EDITH DEMPORT
ABOUT 1955

ever, 6 months later she say's to me, 'Charlie, don't you think it's about time we were married.' I set the wedding day April 7, 1938, which was her 63rd birthday." They were married at 134 Freeman Avenue, Solvay, N. Y. by the Rev. W. Carleton Stevens, pastor of the Freeman Avenue Baptist Church.

Charlie says that they practically brought up her grandson, Richard. "I took him chuck hunting before he was 2, at the age of 5½ years I started to make a rifleman out of him." A newspaper clipping in 1937 shows him in a Boy Scout uniform as a member of Troop 107 of Syracuse. It speaks of his winning local matches and his plans to go to Camp Perry. "At 12 I took him to Camp Perry, where he placed 3rd in the Whistler Trophy match in 1937. I took him again in 38 and 39. When WWII broke out he enlisted in the Navy and was killed at Okinawa March 28, 1945." This was doubtless one of the great tragedies in Charlie's life, and friends say that he never entirely recovered from it.

On December 23, 1940 Charlie enlisted as a Private First Class in Company F, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Regiment, New York Guard. When this enlistment was up he reenlisted for another year, and was discharged on December 23, 1943, his discharge being signed by Colonel Frederick Johnston, Colonel, 3rd Regiment, with the remarks "Excellent service, honest and faithful." I believe that this speaks volumes of Charlie's character for he was 60 years, 11 months of age at his first enlistment. The discharge also indicates his prior service in the Philippines.

Charlie's wife, Edith, always went with him to all the muzzle loading shoots he attended. While there she never got out of the car, or mixed in with the shoot in any way. As Charlie always had the back of the car loaded down with guns, wooden ramrods, and I presume, tools and parts, I always thought that she might be "minding the store." Of course, at that time women did not participate in shoots as has since become the custom, and there were no womens matches. She did talk to friends who came up to the car, and was not "standoffish." She has been described as a "warm, motherly sort," and apparently was very talkative. Her friends say that whenever people came to the home she was very friendly and would not only talk a blue streak but would always serve a cup of tea or other refreshment of some kind. She was a bigboned woman with a rather stern appearance, but apparently had a keen sense of humor. In 1971 Mrs. Keith wrote Charlie and commented on his always talking about guns. She wrote, "Talking Guns! Remember what Mrs. Demport used to say! 'If there were guns in Heaven she didn't want to go there.' She had quite a sense of humor, didn't she." There is no doubt

that Charlie did talk about his greatest interest at all times. In an undated clipping telling of his 80th birthday he says, "I'd stop my own funeral to talk shootin' irons."

In her later years Mrs. Demport was somewhat disabled and walked with a crutch; she may have had a slight stroke. However, it did not seem to interfere with her activities to any great extent. Even with the crutch she would get around and do things better than a normal person might do. A visitor at their home one night said that somebody spilled something on the floor. Before anyone else could do anything about it she picked up a dishcloth, wet it, threw it down on the floor in the spill, wiped up with the cloth on the end of her crutch and threw the rag in the sink all in one swift motion. She did it with a lot less effort than someone getting down on their hands and knees to do it.

Unfortunately Mrs. Demport's health deteriorated further. Charlie says in his diary that hardening of the arteries affected her memory until she was unable to care for herself. He got his next door neighbor in to help with the housework, but of course, after years of managing her own household this did not work out, and Charlie was forced to take her to the hospital. On February 17, 1961, she was taken to Marcy State Hospital, and spent the rest of her days there. At that time James and Nona Elmer went to live with Charlie for the next few years.

During the time that Mrs. Demport was in the hospital Charlie paid the fees for her care there, and visited her very regularly. Charlie's diary notes: "My wife died early Monday morning September 28, 1964, having known her for 58 years & married 26 years, 5 months and 21 days. We enjoyed our home more than anyone ever knew. She never missed going to a shoot with me, up to the time she went to the hospital, which was February 17, 1961. A more loveable companion never lived. A beautiful woman with a loveable disposition."

Charlie has shot various firearms over a long period of time; just how long I am unable to determine. He has said that he shot his first muzzle loader when he was 8, and I have no reason to doubt it, although I am sure that he did not do much shooting at that age. An article in the "Saratogian" for September 28, 1959 says, "He claims that he first started shooting muzzle loading guns at the age of 8 and has been repairing them ever since." Another article in the Syracuse "Post-Standard" for September 22, 1963 says, "He has won about 200 medals during 70 years of shooting and attending competitions," which would have him shooting since he was thirteen.

Charlie told me that he could not remember anybody in particular teaching him how to shoot; he just hung around with anybody who was shooting and picked up what pointers he could. He also told me that his first gun was a .40 caliber muzzle loading rifle with half stock and open sights, weighing about six pounds. He used this rifle for hunting primarily, but like most boys apparently shot at most everything that moved - or was stationary, for that matter. This may have been the rifle that he borrowed from a neighbor when he ran the trap line in 1893.

In a letter to Henry Happe, dated January 26, 1967, he writes, "When I was a kid in Syracuse, N. Y. Bill Zischang & I used to go to the Anderson farm and watch his Dad (August O. Zischang) and Horace Warner shoot. Horace used a muzzle loader slug gun while Zischang used a .32-40, front seating the bullet, and it was nip and tuck between the two, with Warner just a little ahead." This must have been about 1890.

Charlie has been a member of the National Rifle Association for at least 50 years. I have a letter from the NRA which says: "From our records we can determine that Mr. Demport became a Life Member on November 23, 1926. However, we cannot determine whether he was an annual member prior to his election as Life Member."

He has told me that when he was in the Army from 1901 to 1904 that he was the highest scorer in his troop. This was with the Krag rifle, and the shooting was at 200 to 1000 yards. After that time the first reference to shooting is on November 28, 1909, when the diary notes, "Enjoyed a good day shooting at targets." We have already noted that he went to Camp Perry in 1927, but apparently as a spectator only. In 1928 he was building his shop, so did not attend, and he makes no note of Camp Perry in 1929.

From about 1930 until 1939 he attended nearly every year, although he does not always record it in the diary. Under date of August 21, 1930 the diary reads, "Went to Camp Perry; won a souvenir medal in rifle marksmanship and took a course in hand to hand combat, and won an instructor's certificate." In 1931 Charlie "went to Camp Perry and won Pistol Expert medal." A certificate from the Small Arms Firing School that year says, "Charles T. Demport has completed special course instruction in the following subjects: Rifle Marksmanship, Pistol Marksmanship, Hand to Hand Fighting." That same August he went to Quantico, Virginia and won 6th place and a bronze medal in an "any pistol" match. As a result of his courses in Hand to Hand Fighting he acted as an assistant to Major Strain in the Police Course Personal Combat course at Camp Perry.

I find no record that he went to Camp Perry in 1932, but in 1933 he went on August 25. He notes that he shot the President's Match and the Coast Guard Rapid Fire Match, but does not give his scores. He won medals for expert rifle marksmanship with the service and small bore rifle. He returned to Solvay on September 3. In 1934 he was more successful. With a bad wind he scored 80 in the Navy Match, but in the Coast Guard Rapid Fire Match he won third prize and a medal. In his letter to Mr. Happe he tells about shooting the Navy Match, but does not clearly date the occurance. It may well have been 1935, as he attended the matches that year and has a certificate from the Small Arms Firing School for having completed a special course in Rifle Marksmanship. He says: "The Navy Match at Camp Perry is off hand 20 shots at 200 yards. The Army target has a ten inch bull counting 5 and has a 4-3-2 ring. Out of 1485 entries there were 99 of us that shot a possible. No wind all day, the next day we shot off the tie but there was an estimated 9 mile wind all day. AND STILL there were eight possibles with a 99 and 98 for the first ten high. I placed 49th with a 96."

Charlie had started shooting pistol, and had developed into an outstanding shot. He did not make any note of the date he started, but from the above records it is apparent that it was some time in the 20's or early 30's. In coaching beginning pistol shooters Charlie seemed to have a system all his own. He would give them no advice or instruction. but hand them a pistol and a box of cartridges. Sometimes other shooters were scared to death of the subsequent happenings, but that did not change things. After they had shot, then and then only would Charlie give them some instructions. I am told that anyone who came in the shop and wanted to shoot revolver was accomodated, and they adjourned to the bullet trap in the garage. It must have been a noisy performance, and there wasn't much but a 3/4 inch pine board between the bullet trap and the neighbors. Otto Ramsing lived at 125 Charles Avenue, next door to Charlie's home, and they also used to shoot in his cellar. In 1934 he was made captain of the big-bore pistol team in Syracuse. The team was officially the Onondaga Rifle and Pistol Club, and the members were A. D. Potter, E. J. Dwyer, C. A. Kyle, Charles Demport and F. D. Ellis.

His diary records the results of several matches in 1935, only one of which was lost, and that to the Oneida State Police. Unfortunately he stopped recording in his diary at this time, because as he said when he resumed in 1961, "being seemingly too busy." This is unfortunate not only in regard to his shooting, but this time covered a productive period in his life. He also captained the Syracuse Ladies Revolver Club team, which is reported to have defeated

the Syracuse Police Department in a match. He did not shoot pistol exclusively, as I find an old score card of the Onondaga Rifle Club Senior Small Bore Shoot on October 8, 1939. With the .22 rifle he shot scores of 46 and 50 slow fire and 50 and 50 at rapid fire, for a score of 196 and first place in the match. However, the competition with the pistol teams continued as he says in his diary, "When the war broke out we disbanded. I then took up muzzle loading rifle and pistol." Presumably one reason for this change was the lack of ammunition during the war years.

Up to about 1958 Charlie attended muzzle loading shoots more or less irregularly, but after that time he followed the tour regularly and attended all the shoots over a large area. His diary says that he participated in 17 muzzle loading shoots at Fort Ticonderoga, and he won the New York State Muzzle Loading Rifle Championship in 1959. "The Saratogian" of September 29, 1959 says, "Demport, who won the State Muzzle Loading title with his sharpshooting at the annual matches at Fort Ticonderoga Muzzle Loading Association at Fort Ti earlier in the month was just shooting for the fun of it over the weekend." This I doubt. Various records indicate that Charlie participated in shoots, in addition to Fort Ti, at Wallingford, Conn., Dunbarton, Mass., Shartlesville & York, Pa., Schuylerville, Alabama, Ithaca, Gilbertsville, Ontario, Elbridge, Messina, and Honeoye, all in New York, and at Brockville, Canada. A shoot schedule has the following typed on the heading: "Shoot dedicated to Mr. & Mrs. Charles Demport, Solvay, N. Y. The twelfth Annual Fort Ticonderoga Muzzle Loading Association Shoot, to be held at Fort Ticonderoga, N. Y. on September 15 & 16, 1956."

In 1958 he joined the Elbridge Rod and Gun Club, and subsequently did much of his shooting there. In 1964 he constructed loading benches there with what he called "loading pits" at the back of the benches. These were wooden boxes set in the ground. Because of Charlie's short stature and his stooped condition, he found these pits a great aid in loading.

Two interesting letters giving some of Charlie's philosophy and rules for shooting, and the types of guns he shot, are reproduced on other pages. One, the letter to Henry Happe, has been quoted previously. The other, to H. E. Clark, obviously a stranger to him, clearly illustrates the pains he would take and the time he would spend to get a tyro started on the right track in shooting muzzle loaders.

From about 1960, and as long as he was able to continue his shooting, he took a protege almost every year and taught them to shoot muzzle loaders. Among them were the Warner

Brothers, who won places in some Junior matches; in 1962 Judy Ashby, in 1965 April Lee, and in 1967 Norman Doyle. At shoots, however, he was always willing to spend time with anyone who wanted to shoot. By this time Charlie's vision was poor and he was only able to shoot with a telescope. In August 1968 he had cataracts removed from both eyes at the Community Hospital in Syracuse. During his shooting career he has won over 200 medals. These are on display in the clubhouse of the Elbridge Rod and Gun Club where he was affiliated during his later shooting career. When the club built a new range in 1968 it was named the Charles Demport Range in his honor.

Two stories about Charlie's shooting career are not only interesting, but humorous. At every shoot someone would get a patch stuck in a barrel, and appeal to Charlie for advice. His stock answer whenever that happened was, "You're supposed to take the buttons off that shirt before you stick it down the barrel." Then he would tell them to pour a little water down the barrel and let it set for a while, and of course the patch would then come out.

Jim Elmer says that he and Charlie attended a shoot at Honeoye some years ago. There they used to put up a circus tent without sidewalls and the participants shot from the shelter of the tent. At one shoot a man was loading next to Charlie, and also next to one of the tent poles. When he got ready to shoot he would snuggle up to the pole and get some additional support for offhand shooting. Charlie didn't say anything, but the next time the man got ready to shoot Charlie began to swing on one of the guy ropes of the tent, and the man very soon stopped getting any support from the pole. This was entirely typical of Charlie; he would get his point across without a lot of talk.

Several people have told me that when Charlie worked on a gun he would make a small hole under a screw and put a small shot in this hole when he reassembled the gun. If the gun was dismantled the shot would fall out, and if it came back to his shop he had this way of finding out if the gun had been tinkered with. Charlie has confirmed that he did this.

Charlie has told me his method of adjusting flintlock mechanisms. He says that the angle between the top of the flint and the face of the frizzen should be 43°; this is as the flint strikes the frizzen. He uses the flint with the flat up and the bevel down. The flint should strike the frizzen two thirds of the way up from the surface of the pan. The frizzen should have no more than 2½ pounds pressure to trip it, and it could have less. He prefers English black

flints over any others, and feels that they give the best spark. He changes flints after every 10 or 12 shots, and sharpens the used flint by regrinding on an abrasive wheel rather than by knapping. He prefers a three pound trigger pull on his rifles to something lighter.

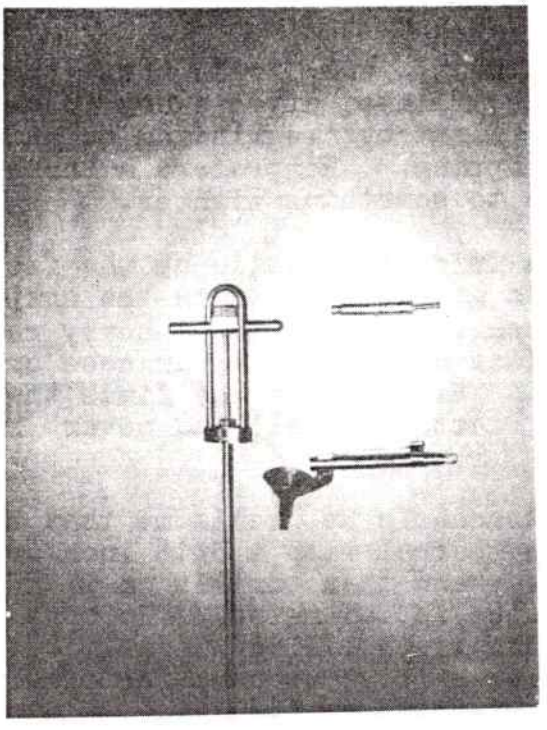
In refacing a frizzen he welds up the face with a small rat-tail file, then grinds it down to the shape he wants. He tempers the frizzen by heating to a cherry red and quenching it in water, and does not draw the hardness or otherwise temper it in any way. He says that he finds that when faced in this manner they last very well and never require refacing again.

In boring a touchhole he tells me that he bores in from the outside of the barrel with a 3/16 inch drill until he is almost to the bore, and then drills on with a No. 59 drill, which is .041 inches in diameter. He says that he usually runs a wire into the touchhole to clean it between shots. He uses any powder he happens to have for priming, but recommends FFFFg black if it is available. He also says that if the pan is not full enough to fill up the touchhole it will fire faster - it will flash through.

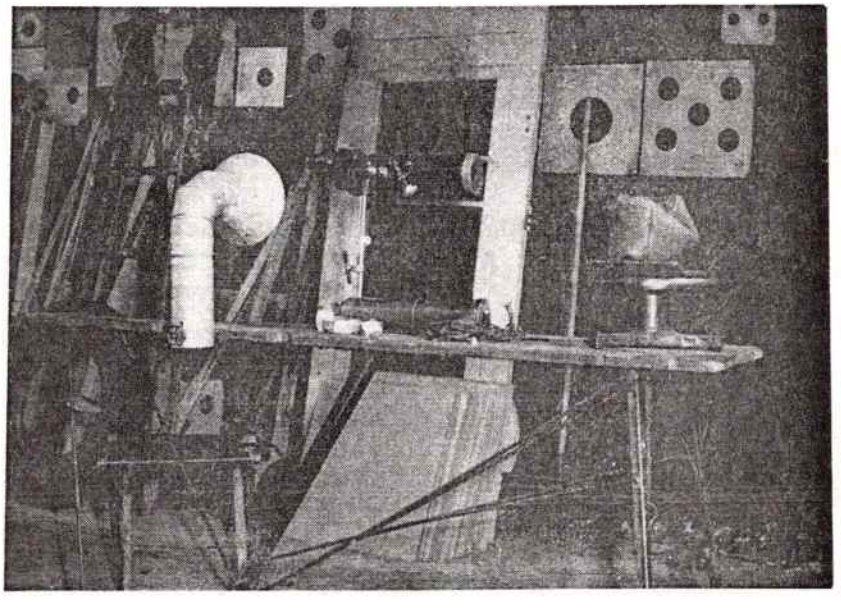
Charlie was somewhat of an inventor, and has invented or developed several items relating to muzzle loading shooting. One of the first of these was a nipple primer. This was a little tool made out of cartridge cases. When pushed down it injects a little priming powder into the nipple of a percussion gun to make it more sure fire. The device works somewhat on the principle of the fuel injection system of the Willys-Knight automobile engine, and it is said to have been patterned after that. Charlie made a good many of them; the first ones were made in the 1940's, and the last date I find of their manufacture is in December 1967, when he made the 695th one.

Charlie's diary notes that "When shooting the flinter off the bench the shooter next to you is liable to get some of the blast from the pan. So as not to have to wait for the shooter next to you, some made up a baffel, which was a stand about 4 feet high and 2 feet wide, and was stood on the ground." At a Ticonderoga shoot Charlie found that someone had improved on this by making a shield that fastened to the bench. He further improved on this and made one with a 7 inch diameter base that was adjustable for height and could be moved around as desired. This is obviously a device that was developed by several people. Apparently, from Charlie's records, he made about ten of these in 1964.

Charlie also developed an adjustable powder measure for



CLEANING ROD, POWDER MEASURE AND NIPPLE PRIMER
INVENTED AND BUILT BY CHARLES DEMPORT



SHOOTING BENCH DEVELOPED BY
CHARLES T. DEMPORT

throwing small charges of pistol powder for muzzle loading pistols. It is not something that he ever made in quantity, but apparently only for himself and a few of his friends. As early as 1964 and possibly earlier he developed the Demport Pile Driver Ball Starter, with a tip that fit the ball and a weighted handle that dropped down on a shoulder to seat the ball flush with the muzzle. He seems to have made only 19 of these. Still another development was a grease pump for lubricating the ball in muzzle loading cap and ball revolvers, and I have no record of any production of this item.

Charlie made nipple wrenches that were particularly well adapted for use on pistols and revolvers by swaging Snap-On carburetor socket wrenches to fit the nipple. He re-heat-treated these after swaging. His last invention was made on December 25, 1965, and was for a cleaning rod for muzzle loading guns. His brochure on this item is reproduced on another page.

His comments concerning the safety of the cleaning rod are particularly refreshing, but you should hear him tell about it. The price he charged in 1966 for the rod was $27.50. Of this he claimed that $7.00 was for materials and the remaining $20.50 was for eighteen hours of skilled labor required to make one. Charlie made about twenty of these, and after he no longer had a shop to work in I made five or six for him, in addition to one for myself. It is an interesting invention. From my experience I am sure that his cost figures are correct, and he was working for nothing.

Charlie has been called "thrifty" by some of his acquaintences, but in many ways he was a most generous man. He was always donating money, as well as prizes and medals, to clubs. He never brought his charges up to the increase in cost of living, and from his daybook it is easy to see that his prices were so low that it would have been impossible for him to amass any sizeable fortune. He kept no records that are now available during his early years in the shop, but from 1937 on his largest years were from 1944 to 1954, when his net income from the shop was approximately $2000 annually. In 1964 his gross income from the shop was only $1000, and in 1965 only a little over $800. Conversely, he thought that prices to him should not increase, and that he should be able to get room and board or meals for the same price that he had paid in 1906.

In his later years Charlie lost his drivers license. Perhaps he had an accident as a result of his failing eyesight, but people tell me that he had some strange driving habits. One was that he never looked right or left when he backed out of his driveway, but backed straight out in the

road and then turned in the direction he wanted to go. One day when he did this someone cracked him. His only reaction was, "By God, they ought to have had plenty of time to see me coming." He apparently was a hard-nosed old driver, as he was in a variety of other ways. However, in letters to the newspapers and in other ways Charlie expressed his concern with injustice, and his files are filled with clippings that show his compassion for anyone suffering hardship or in trouble. In one of his notebooks he has copied a number of brief sayings that seem to illustrate his philosophy, and which may have caused him to stay active through 92 years of life. Here are some of them.

Rich in faith and hope, poor in the material things of life.

Count your nights by the stars, by the smiles and not the tears; count your age by the number of friends you have, not years.

May the road ahead be downhill, and may the wind be at your back.

I have friends whose likes and dislikes are so akin to my own that their hearts beat with mine in everything that I do or say.

While blood is thicker than water, the ties of good friendship and association are thicker than blood.

No greater love hath man, than he whc risks his life to save another. (Andrew Carnegie)

A poster that apparently had been posted in his shop shows a man at work and a man at rest. A clock in the center has the hands pointing to 7 o'clock. The legend is: "The test of a man is what he does when he is not required to do anything."

In a letter dated October 7, 1966 Charlie says, "You spoke about outliving your usefulness. No person who can take care of itself has outlived its usefulness."

Here is one final one. The previous ones may have been copied as appealing to him. This one sounds as if it was his recording of his own thoughts: "Develop a hobby that will keep you interested. Keep flexible in your thinking. Life can be fascinating at any age. A feeling of usefulness and a purpose in living are extremely important. Get a part time job. Use the loveable rocking chair occasionally if you will, but don't plan to rock your life away, with thoughts of

what used to or might be. Life can be fascinating or meaningless at any age. If interesting there is always something to live for. It is when one feels lonely and useless that life loses its meaning. There are natural changes that we must accept. But it is the way you accept them that counts. You are the one who can add light to your years and years to your life."

Charlie lived by this philosophy, and therefore it is a fitting conclusion to this brief history of a most remarkable man.

"SO LONG, CAPTAIN"

January 26-1967

Mr & Mrs Henry Happe;
Ramsey,N.J.

Dear Henry;& Fellow Muzzle Loader:

Sure pleased to recieve your greetings,which arrived here just in time.and what a coincident it was,it was the 87th card,and have received eleven since, making a total of 98.As it looks from here now,I will have to get aquwinted with two more Happes,to make it an even one-hundred.If I can get Elmer to do the driving,I will try to make Temple Hill.I am sponsoring 6 shoots this spring.For first prize a 24 karat gold plated powder measure,(The Secretarys Match) 5 shots -50 yards-OFF hand)any sights-all record shots on ONE bull.re-entry.Heres hoping that you make a good effort to take it back to Ramsey.The beauty of OFF hand shooting to become an expert,one doesnt have to do too much shooting.You can do most of the steady holding practice right in the home. Tack a half inch diameter bull on the wall at eye level.15 feet from muzzle is ideal.Now you are ready for your practice,if you have set triggers so much the better,you wont have to cussion the hammer.Point the rifle directly at the bull,not at the cielin and then lower it till you are on a level.To me nothing looks more foolish,I have yet to see a crack off hand shot point his gun up into the sky and then bring it down onto the chuck,,they pointed it directly at the chuck.The crack off hand shot holds his frfle NEARLY STILL and the man who holds it the stillest is naturally the best shot.I generally check the gun hard enough so the gun and head move as one.Now we are ready to take aim. Personally I like to hit where I am aiming (in the off hand) so naturally I aim at the black,and so long as the front sight is on the black,nothing but the black can or will be hit.If you are off of the target,dont just push the muzzle onto the bull, If the gun is in the center of a 5 inch bull at 100 yds and you swing the muzzle over .021 it will be a 9.BUT if the gun is in the center and you push the whole gun over 2.5 inches,it will still be in the bull.Most set triggers have about 2 ounce pull and the standard trigger about 3 lbs.When aiming the front sight will be moving ffom side to side and up and down.Whenever you catch the front sight approaching the center of movement,that is the time to let off.Keep right on aiming and keep on pulling the trigger back till you think that you have pulled up to about 8 to 10 lbs.It should not take more than 10 seconds from the time you get onto the target to the trigger pull.The increased trigger pull developes extra strenght as well as one of the cures for flinching.After each dry shot,sit for 5 to 10 seconds with the gun in lap.This is dope given to me by one of the greatest off hand shots in 1933 Morris Fisher at Quantico Va.

Here is what it did for me,the Navy match at Camp Perry is Off hand 20 shots at 200 yds,The Army target,it has a ten inch bull counting 5 and has a 4-3-2-ring.Out of 1485 entries there were 99 of us that shot a possible.No wind all day,the next day we shot off the tieBUT there was an estimated 9 mile wind all day. And still there were eight possibles with a 99 & 98 for the first ten high.I placed 49th with a 96.They used the Creedmore system of scoring.When I was a kid in Syracuse,N.Y.Bill Zischzng & I used to go to the Anderson farm and watch his Dad and Horace Warner shoot.Glade Kieth has a yarget that Horace made on the American std target,I will count the score next time I go there. However I do know that it was a 20 shot match and that he had 13 shots in the ten ring which is 4 inches diameter.Horace used a muzzle loader slug gun while Zischang used a 32)40,front seating the bullet.and it was nip and tuck between the two,with Warner just a little ahead.
Well Henry maybe I better slow down a bit before I bore you stiff. However as my friend Joe here says,Quote,Charlie I can see that it isnt a letter from a shooter to a fisherman.
Now when you write to your Dad,Dont forget to tell him that I dont mind getting an extra letter or two once in a while.

Till then this is from the old man who says ,write again,and

Live each day of your life
As though you expected to live

Charles T. Demport
Gunsmith
123 Charles Ave.
Solvay 9, New York

F/L;H.E.Clark
R.C.A.F.Station,
St Jean,Quebec,
Canada.

Dear Mr Clark;

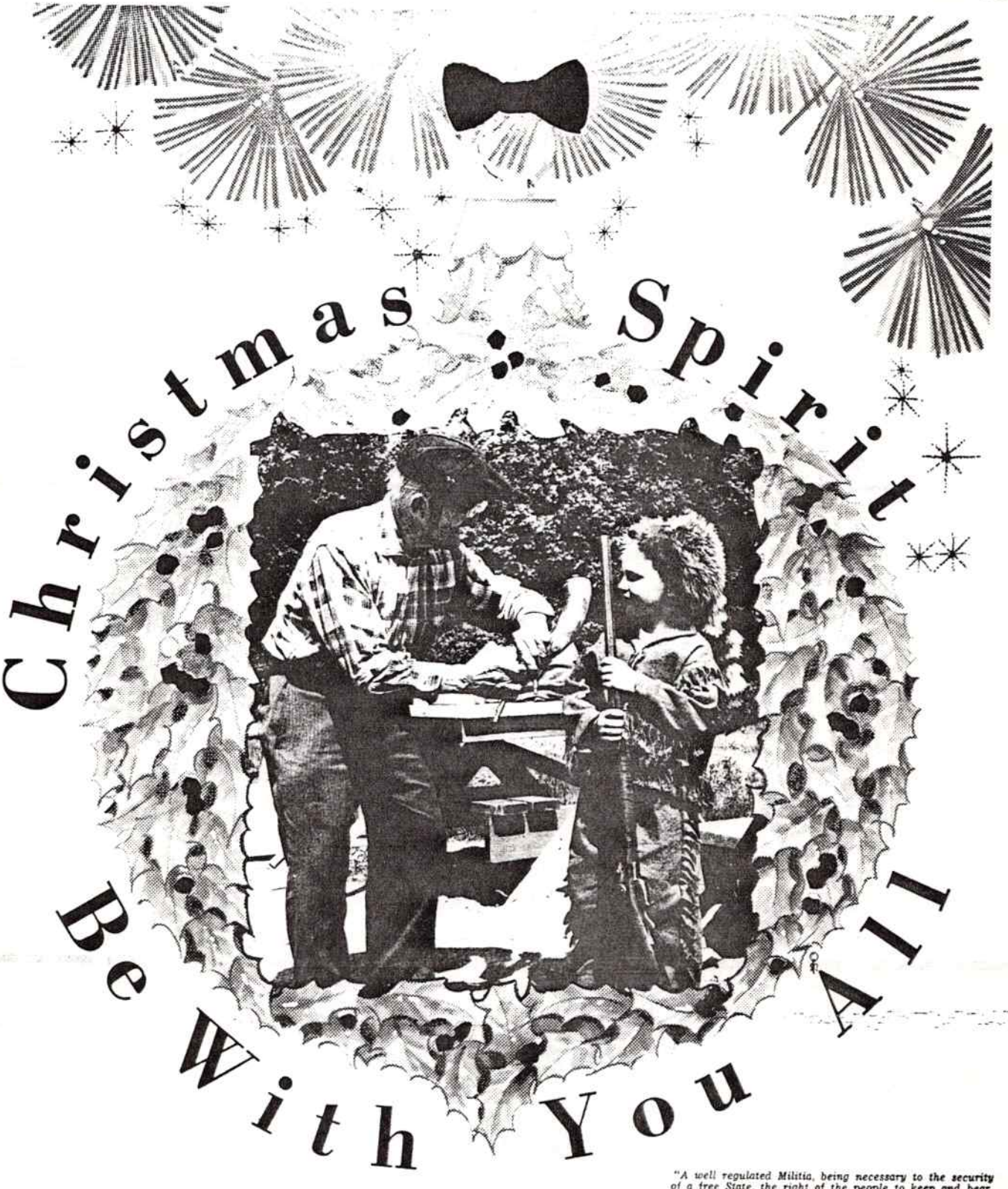
Your inquiry to Mrs Daby,dated Oct 20-1964 in reguards to information,in re to muzzle loading fire-arms was turned over by her to Mr James Elmer(N.Y.State M.L.Rifle champion)who in turn asked me to help in complying some of the dope and datta that you asked for.I shall return your questions for your refference.I admire the form in which the questions are asked.Question Number 1.Smooth bore pistols are obsolete and useless for any kind of shooting,as a target gun.Of course they were used till the rifled guns took over,however the smooth bore musket has recently come to life,a round patched ball has to be used An elongated ball will tumble,UNLESS it has finns on the outside or inside like the rifled slug or German hollow ball or bullet. Number 2,The ball should be bore diameter,the best results are obtained when the ball shows faint rifling marks when pushed in to the bore bare. The thickness of the patching depends on the depth of the rifling,While linnen is best,it is least used due to scarcity and price.Question? the lands in my rifle are .010 deep. I may use a ball that is bore diameter,or .0005 over,or even .001 under,how thick should the patch be, as that varies with the tightness of the weave.Take a piece say .006 thick ,push the ball down 4 to 6 inches,then put your mouth over the muzzle,suck on it,and note if it will hold your toung,I know it wont,which means that it is not air tight,push it down onto the powder and blow it out. Now use a patch that is .007 and keep on increasing the thickness of the patch until you have arrived at the point where the vaccum created will hold the toung for some time,That is the thickness to use,however a thicker patch will be vaccum tight BUT it will make loading that much harder.Number 3.The amount of powder to use in any barrel ,depends on the thickness-lenght-material or kind of metal it is made of.My 71 years of M.L. experience has enabled me to comply a formula that will give the best results.Unless I knew the lenght of the barrel,the width of the groves and their depth and number of groves,and the bore diameter,this would enable me to figure out the cubical content of the barrel,If it was 30 inches long,it would take 11.75 grains of 3F,for every cubic inch of barrel barrel content,Heavier loads than this are useless,unless ignited in the center or nearer the front end .my data is for barrels from 6 to 50 inches in lenght and they vary from 20 grains fo~~zzhez6z~~ per cubic inch for the 6 inch,to 11.3 per cubic inch for the 50 inch DO not confuse these figures with the shot-gun or musket barrels. Number 4.All my guns use No 11 caps,however No 12 nipples will

last longer.The hammer pressure should not be less than 6 or more than 7 pounds.No 5.The Muzzle Blast Magazine has ads in it in re to making these guns.Mr Elmer can furnish patterns for the half and full stock KY rifle and pistol patterns.No 6.Your best b bet would be to look up the ads in one of the gun books.No 7.In my estimation there is no such animal as a small game and target rifle in ONE stock.In the first place the small game rifle is much lighter that the target and vice versa.In the second place, the sights are nowhere the same or even nearly alike.We have two bench rifles here,a 50 cal,42 inch bbl,1.5 across flats,Douglas wt 28.75 the other is a 45 caliber,38 inch bbl,wt 15.5 weichold bbl round,1.375 at the breech straight taper to one inch dia at the mu muzzle.Then I have an offhand rifle,50 cal.34 inch bbl,round, 1,875 dia tapered to .93 at muzzle.By the way I intended to say in No 1. that the best cal for a pistol is .40 cal,not less than a 10 or more than a 12 inch bbl.they are tops up to 50 yards. round or octagon,not over .825 at breech to .700 at muzzle. My off hand rifle wt is 9 lbs and does well as a bench rest rifle. Two of the best off hand rifles that I know of have a 30 inch bbl. wt 8.75 and 45 caliber.both are flint locks.YES a 45 cal would seem large and would be large if it were a 45-70.The squirrel gun was 40 caliber and under and considered a 60 yard gun.This is the end of sheet No.1. and zzzz

MUZZLE BLASTS

PRICE 60 CENTS

DECEMBER 1970



"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Second Amendment
to the Constitution

The Demport Cleaning Rod and its Uses
Invented December 25, 1965

This rod revolutionized the method of cleaning the muzzle loading guns. A method that has been in vogue for over 500 years. Born in 1880 when the muzzle loader was well on the way out. Not until 85 years later did anyone attempt to improve the laborious method of cleaning the mjzzle loader, which consisted of a wooden rod with a damp rag on its end. It was made to fit tight on the way down or else it wouldn't fit tight on the way out. Most of the fouling was pushed ahead of the patch and against the endo of the breech plug. However, by using several patches, the fouling was finally absorbed by the patches after ten or fifteen strokes. The radial bearing and the rod rides on a thrust bearing. The collar on the end of the tube and the button on the end of the rod are interchangeable for the different calibers. The collar should be no less than.010 or more than .015 smaller than the bore diameter and the button between .075 and .080 less than the bore diameter. The button is knurled on the front edge to prevent slipping when revolved to clean the end of the plug. All cleaning patches should be from 7.25 to 7.5 long and from 4 to 4.5 times as wide as the bore to be cleaned. Stand the rod on end, place a moistened patch central over the button, ten guide it into the muzzle. It won't enter more than half ich or so, being stopped by the collar on the end of the tube. Now reach back and squeeze the rod and tube handles together, this withdrawn the collar and lets the patch go by. Do all the forward pushing with the knurled knob and when all the way down, revolve it to the right to clean the end of the plug. Now place the end of the handle in the palm of the hand, placing two fingers on each side of the handle. Don't squeeze yet, push the tube forward, this compressed the patch then take a firm grip withdraw about 6 or 8 inches, stop, let go of the handles and then push the inner rod only, back against the breech, take a firm grasp and slowly withdraw. When pressed hard enough the lands will groove the patch. It is impossible for the patch to leave the rod and stay in the bore. Reverse the patch and repeat and finish with a dry patch. This is important. TWO fingers on a side. That doesn't mean one finger on one side and three on the other. Yes, it can be used that way, but don;t be surprised if you find the rod bent just below the thrust bearing. It is proof that three fingers can pull more than one. Do not hang onto the tubing while withdrawing, as the rod and tubing must be free to turn with the rifling that is what the ball bearings are for. When inserting or withdrawing, keep an eye on the tube,nwhen properly done, NO part of the cleaning rod can or will touch the bore. It is impossible to lose a patch in the bore.

(FOREWARNING)

Jealousy breeds contempt and I have a miserable contempt for jealousy. To clean a gun with this rod, the gun is pointing to the rear and slightly downward. This position has already been banned by some range officers as being unsafe, stating that it MIGHT be loaded. If there is a shooter that is foolish enough to start cleaning a loaded gun, I have yet to learn his or her name. Still it could be done if the shooter was absent minded. A loaded gun without a cap on the nipple is just as safe as an unloaded gun. Either one has never killed anyone. I am an advocate of safety, tempered with danity. A short time ago I was remonstrated by Mr. Gould for having my rifle pointing to the reab at spectators. (I was cleaning it) I made no reply however, I waited until he was ready to drive home. There were four rifles laying horizontally across the floor. I says, "Peter, you are not going to drive through the streets of Syracuse with those guns pointing at every pedestrian that you pass, are you?" To which he replied, "Charlie, those guns are not loaded" and I said, neither was the gun I was cleaning...

Charles T. Demport
123 Charles Ave.
Solvay, N.Y.

UNITED STATES TREASURY DEPARTMENT

In recognition of the patriotic and generous donation made to the United States, this citation is awarded to

Charles T. Demport

Given under my hand and seal on August 5, 19 43

Henry Morgenthau Jr.

Secretary of the Treasury

Field and Stream also acknowledges your generous and patriotic contribution to the Government through the Give 'Em Guns Fund